



Uphold the dignity and rights of the trafficked child.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Asia ACTs December 2008:
Children Speak Out against Trafficking in Southeast Asia**

Quezon City, Philippines-December 11, 2008- On the occasion of the Day Against Trafficking on 12 December 2008, Asia ACTs calls on campaign partners to encourage children and young people to speak out and fight against child trafficking.

Asia ACTs is the regional campaign to fight child trafficking with campaign partners in Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma and Philippines. Asia ACTs appeals to States and civil society in Southeast Asia to create the space for children to participate, aware that when young people have the power to secure their own protection and build an environment in which they can thrive, the whole society benefits.

Children are the best spokespersons in articulating their concern for themselves and for other children. By listening to children, policy makers and officials can learn a great deal about how they view trafficking and what vulnerabilities must be addressed.

However, in order to participate in the fight against the hideous crime of child trafficking, children need to be equipped with how to protect themselves. If children are unaware of their right to be free from abuse, or are not warned of dangers such as trafficking, they are more vulnerable to exploitation. The participation of children starts with their right to know about issues that affect their lives. Children must also be given safe channels for participation and self-expression.

Thus, the month of December 2008 marks the beginning of a year-long campaign to promote child participation in anti-trafficking activities:

Burma ACT spearheads its campaign activities with the participation of 3000 children with adults in Mae Sod, Thailand. Burma ACT is an alliance with 15 member organizations based in refugee camps and migrant communities along the border the Burma border with China and Thailand.

Vietnam's activities from 7 to 22 December led by Ho Chi Minh City Child Welfare Foundation will rally the participation of hundreds of children in HoChi Minh City, Da Nang and Thanh Hoa.

Village Focus International launches child-centered events in 3 districts of Vientiane and Salavan Province, Lao PDR. Two districts in Salavan Province will hold separate activities from 5 to 12 December in collaboration with Salavan Provincial Education. On December 20, another commemorative event is scheduled in Vientiane Capital City in collaboration with NGOs, UNIAP and Lao Youth Union.

Indonesia ACT member, SAMIN Foundation, will organize National Children's Forum in Jogjakarta on 19-21 December 2008. Some 1,350 children from all over Indonesia will attend to discuss and plan about children's role in the anti-child trafficking campaign. Indonesia ACT works for the genuine involvement of children in decision-making processes.

Philippines Against Child Trafficking (PACT), a network of NGOs and individuals primarily from government agencies, will launch activities in 45 areas all over the archipelago with the sub-theme: "Children, speak out! Help find and save the trafficked child."

Asia ACTs (Asia ACTs Against Child Trafficking) **International Campaign Against Child Trafficking (ICaCT)**
Rm. 312, 3rd level, Philippine Social Science Center, Commonwealth Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel: (632) 9290822 Fax: (632) 9290820 Email: asiaacts@pltdsl.net www.stopchildtrafficking.info

Cambodia ACTs and Child Trafficking Watch Thailand (CTWT) in Thailand will hold activities that bring old and young together, giving children the space to lead and develop their own processes in partnership with adults. Child Trafficking Watch Thailand (CTWT) is a network of 25 NGOs working on children and women issues in Thailand's Upper Northern Region while Cambodia ACTs is an alliance of 11 NGOs in Cambodia.

December 12 marks the adoption of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Palermo, Italy. Since the start of the anniversary celebration in 2003, December became a very special month of educational and commemorative activities. However, 2008 is more significant because the celebration jumpstarts the child participation effort of the campaign which will bear fruit for many years ahead. Asia ACTs believes that the participation of children and young people in their own protection and development is important for the fight against child trafficking to succeed.

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For more information, please contact:

Asia ACTs Secretariat

Contact Persons: Amihan V. Abueva, Regional Coordinator
Nannette Matilac, Media and Information Officer
Rm. 312, 3/F Philippine Social Science Center, Commonwealth Avenue
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel: (632) 9290822 Fax: (632) 9290820
Email: asiaacts@pltdsl.net

Cambodia

Contact Person: Chea Pyden
Vulnerable Children Assistance Organization (VCAO)
House No. 22, Street 118
Sangkat Phsar, Depo III, Khan Tuol Kok
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: (855-12) 876-422
Fax: (855-23) 884-722
Email: cambodia-acts@online.com.kh

Vietnam

Contact Person: Huynh Kiem Tien
Ho Chi Minh City Child Welfare Foundation
85/65 Pham Viet Chanh St.
Ward 19, Binh Thanh District
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Tel: (84-8) 840-1406
Fax: (84-8) 840-1407
Email: kiemtienhbt@yahoo.com

Lao PDR

Contact Person: Kongseng Sirivath
Village Focus International
PO Box 4697 Vientiane
Lao PDR
Telefax: (85621) 452080
Email: kongseng@villagefocus.org

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Burma

Contact person: Aung Myo Min
Human Rights Education Institute of Burma
G.P.O 485 Chiang Mai 50000, Thailand
Telefax: (66 53) 120422
Email: myomin@cscsoms.com

Indonesia

Contact person: Emmy Lucy Smith
Indonesia ACTs
Jalan Mesjid i/11, RT 01/11
Bidara Cina Jatinegra, Jakarta
1330 Indonesia
Telefax: (62) 21 850 7823
Email: ind_acts@yahoo.com
Website: www.Indonesia-ACTs.com

Thailand

Contact person: Juthamas Rajchprasit
Child Trafficking Watch Thailand
25/6 Tonkam Road 2 Thasara Muang
Chiangmai 50000, Thailand
Telefax Number: (662) 053-248689
Email: ctwt_tfkh@hotmail.com
Website: www.hugla-on.com

Philippines

Contact Person: Marcelina Carpizo
Philippines Against Child Trafficking (PACT)
Rm. 316, 3/F Philippine Social Science Center
Diliman, Quezon City
Tel: (632) 929-03-47
E-mail: philippinecampaign@gmail.com

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